

A Study of Reverse Dies Used with Columbus Civil War Tokens

By John Roberts

CONA Presentation November 18th, 2015

A shortage of small change began almost as soon as the first shots of the Civil War were fired. As in other cities, several Columbus merchants issued tokens to fill the void. Nine issuers of store cards are definitively recognized in the Fuld catalog.



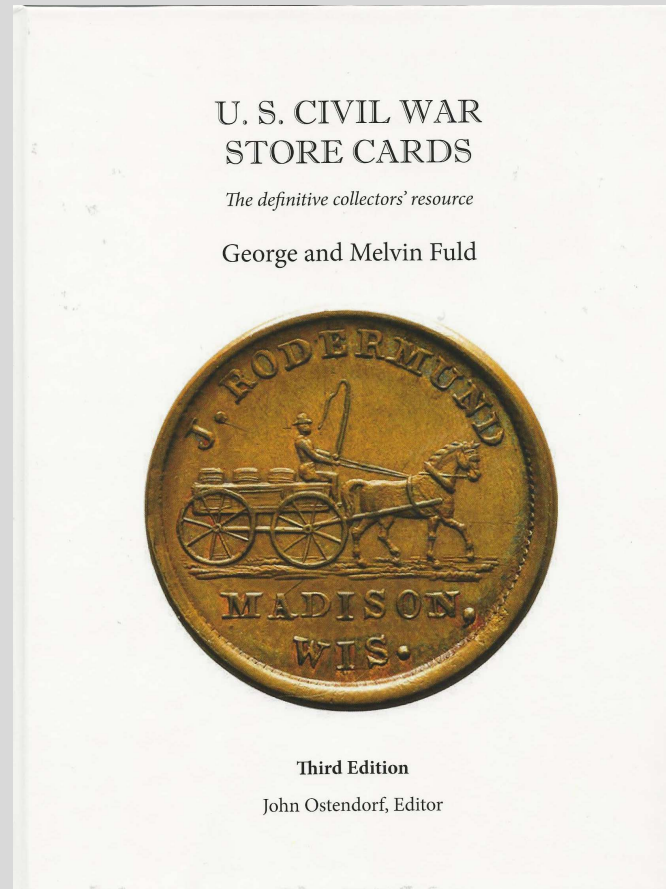
Two of the merchants used 2 store card dies for their tokens, making a total of 11 obverse dies. The John Grether die originally had his profession misspelled. You can still see traces of the errant word on the corrected die. The St. Martin tokens come with two distinct sizes of lettering.



The overwhelming majority of Columbus tokens are struck in copper. Several marriages are also struck in other compositions, such as zinc coated copper, brass and copper-nickel. All of the off metal strikes are rare, and the copper-nickel pieces are extremely rare



The greatest source of variation among the Columbus tokens is the array of reverse dies used. 29 different dies are currently identified in marriages for the city. With the 11 merchant dies and the 4 compositions along with 1 edge variant, 63 varieties are listed in the Fuld catalog.



There were two manufacturers of Columbus Civil War store cards. Both companies were from Cincinnati. The firm of John Stanton made the tokens for Grether. The other eight merchants used the private mint run by William K. Lanphear. Many of this firm's dies were engraved by Frederick Lutz. Several of the reverse dies used for Columbus bear his name



All of the John Grether tokens use one of the Stanton Indian Head dies for their reverse. These can be incredibly difficult to tell apart. Fortunately for Columbus collectors, the choices are limited. The misspelled die is only paired with Reverse 1042 or 1043. Note the slight differences in position of the last two stars.



The die was then reworked with the corrected spelling. Traces of the mistake are still visible. For 1863 dated pieces, two dies were used. Reverse 1037 and 1042 are fairly easy to tell apart. Die 1037 has the high date and the last feather is distant from the last star.



The corrected Grether die was also paired with two 1864 dated Indian Head dies. The three varieties produced are all considered numismatic strikes. The copper-nickel marriages are rated R-10 while the copper strikes are R-9. My example of Reverse 1046 is from another city and the 1047 in copper-nickel is from Steve Hayden's archives.



The Heintz & Henkle tokens are very easy to attribute as there are only three stock reverse dies used. The group is still a challenge as two of the varieties also are listed in copper-nickel. Rev 1083 features a Phrygian capped Liberty, Rev 1125 is one of the Hermes variations and Rev 1177 features an eagle on our national shield.



Some of the tokens issued by John and Viet Koerner are among the most commonly encountered pieces from Columbus. The marriage with the eagle found on Rev 1178 has thousands of surviving examples. There are two Phrygian Cap dies used with this store card die, Revs 1082 and 1084. Note how high the last star is on Rev 1082.



Five of the Koerner varieties are rated as R-9 in the Fuld catalog. The marriage with Rev 1082 is fairly common in copper but rare in brass. Two marriages with Hermes head dies exist. Rev 1125 has 8 stars on the left, while Rev 1226 has 9. The spacing on the right is also clearly different. There are two marriages with flying eagle dies. Rev 1166 has the small date and the large date is found on Rev 1168.



Depending on which reverse die is present, St. Martin large letters tokens are either common, or very rare. The two varieties with the Phrygian capped Liberty are fairly common. The marriage with Rev 1082 – high last star- is probably the most commonly encountered Columbus Civil War token. Rev 1089 is easily identified by the large date.



The three large letters marriages with these reverse dies are all rated R-9. The two Hermes head dies are fairly easy to tell apart. Rev 1125 has its first star close to the point of the bust and is signed by Lutz. Rev 1127 has its last star close to the date. Rev 1178 is the only eagle die paired with the large letters die.



The St. Martin tokens with the small letters store card die are the most difficult group to attribute. There are several reverse dies that are very similar. These two are not. Rev 1166 features the flying eagle and small date. Rev 1434 is a stock die from the manufacturer of most Columbus tokens. Both marriages illustrated here are rare.



Two varieties are known with similar dies illustrating an eagle with outstretched wings. Both dies have a flat topped 3. Rev 1178 has the end of the stem over the center of the 1 and distant from the number. The center arrowhead is even with the top of the 3. On Rev 1179 the stem is over the left edge of the 1 and the arrowhead is below the top of the 3.



Five different versions of the Hermes head were used with the small letters store card die. Rev 1123 has 7 stars on the left, Rev 1124 has 8 stars left and 3 above the wing. Rev 1125 has 8 stars on the left spaced farther apart and 2 stars near the wing. It is also signed by Lutz. Rev 1126 has 9 stars on the left. Rev 1130 has ornaments on either side of the date.



The tokens issued by William Restieaux are fairly easy to attribute, but a couple of the varieties are quite rare. Rev 1180A has the eagle with diagonal tailfeathers and a round topped 3 in the date. Rev 1222 features the Union shield. The dental instruments on the Rev 1344 die form an almost comical combination when paired with the grocer's store card. The 1434 Lanphear die was used for two varieties, copper & CN.



While 3 tokens are listed for Henry Schreiner, only the one paired with the Hermes head Rev 1125 actually circulated. Rev 1180 has an eagle with vertical tailfeathers and a round topped 3. Rev 1273, illustrated here by a Patriotic token from Steve Hayden's archive, is difficult to find in any of its handful of uses.



Only a small handful of female merchants issued store cards, so their pieces have added appeal. This is the easiest Columbus token to attribute – there is only one marriage. Mrs. Van Houton – her name is misspelled – made and sold hats adorned with feathers. The Hermes head of Rev 1127 is a fitting mate for her store card die.



Six marriages are known for Wagner's Dining Hall. While none of them are common, only one is considered a numismatic strike. Rev 1082 with the Phrygian capped Liberty was used with several other Columbus merchants. The Hermes head Rev 1124 has a distinctive star arrangement above the wing. The rare marriage with Rev 1342 is certainly worth a tip of the hat.



Three different versions of the eagle with outstretched wings are found paired with Wagner's store card die. Both Rev 1178 and 1179 have the flat topped 3. Note the differing locations of the stem end and center arrowhead. Rev 1180 has a round topped 3 and vertical tailfeathers.



Only one of the tokens issued by Harrison and William Wiatt appears to have been intended for circulation. Rev 1124, a Hermes head with 3 stars above the wing makes another appearance. A full beer mug inside a wreath instantly identifies Rev 1295. Rev 1176 has the bottom of the shield under the eagle's head, while Rev 1177 has the top under the head.



There are other Columbus related pieces from or near the Civil War era, but these are another topic for another day.

